



Impactful Leaders Podcast

Academic Medicine Dean Insights Series

“I’m still growing,” notes Said Ibrahim, Dean of the Thomas Jefferson University Sidney Kimmel Medical College and President of Jefferson University Physicians. Given that he’s 6’8” tall and at the peak of his career, that’s a bit surprising, but of course Dr.

Ibrahim refers to his ongoing growth as a leader. Today’s deans and other leaders in academic medicine must learn how to grow into each new role understand things never taught in medical school and for which there are no formal paths. There’s risk involved, he says: ***“Failure is part of the equation for progress,”*** he says.

Dr. Ibrahim’s story is an inspiring one, starting as a boy on the border of Ethiopia and Somalia, coming to the U.S. as a college basketball recruit, and moving on to medical school and ascending into leadership roles through hard work and passion. His insights, shared with WittKieffer’s Aaron Mitra, FACHE, and Clarence Braddock, M.D., are included in our Academic Medicine Dean Insights series (part of the Impactful Leaders podcast).



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SUPPORTING A TEAM APPROACH: Academic medicine today is a “team sport”, Dr. Ibrahim believes, especially when it comes to getting everyone behind both the clinical and academic missions of their organization. Health systems have become more complex and often operate independently of medical schools, he says, which poses a challenge for maintaining a cohesive mission.

HELPING TOMORROW’S LEADERS: He also highlights the importance of nurturing and growing the scientific workforce amidst declining NIH funding and fewer young people pursuing careers as physician–scientists. At his institution he has created an executive research committee to focus on fundraising and internal grant competitions to bolster research efforts. Additionally, he has supported the establishment of a center of excellence for artificial intelligence and machine learning to integrate new technologies into healthcare and education.

As part of his commitment to the future, Dr. Ibrahim emphasizes the importance of mentorship as a way to inspire and prepare the next generation of healthcare leaders to navigate the evolving landscape of academic medicine.

GREAT LEADERSHIP: Dr. Ibrahim advises future leaders to ensure their institution’s mission resonates with them and to seek continuous learning and mentorship. After all, leading in academic medicine is not getting any easier. “Great leadership requires that one be comfortable with complexity and with human relationships,” he concludes, underscoring the importance of adaptability and connection.

Innovation and change are central themes in Dr. Ibrahim’s approach to leadership. When implementing change, he believes in the importance of being incremental, thoughtful, and inclusive.